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The prophecy.

Paris 1827

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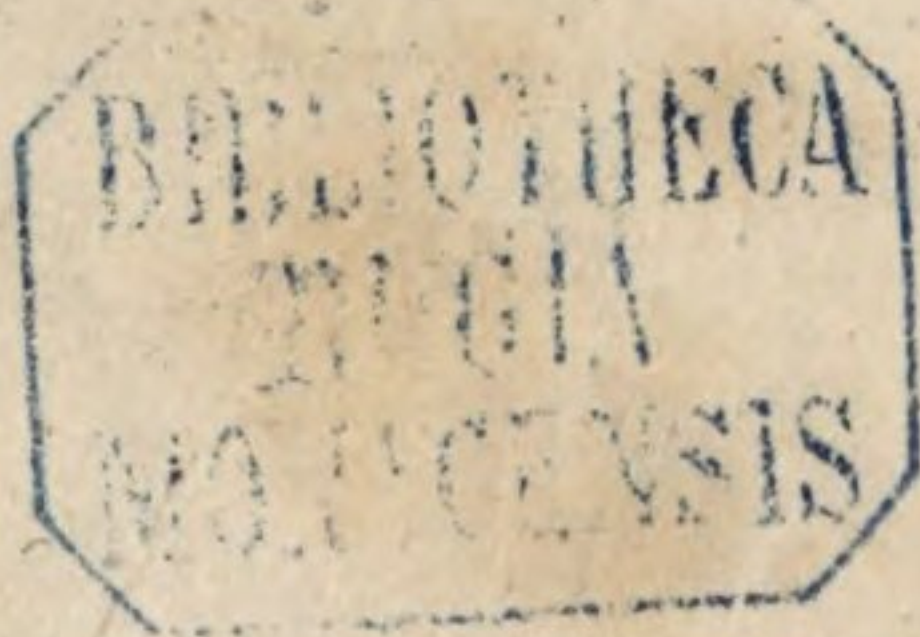
THE
PROPHECY OF DANTE.

Ch. n. 436
362B

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THE
PROPHECY OF DANTE.

BY THE RIGHT HON. LORD BYRON.

" 'Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,
" And coming events cast their shadows before."

CAMPBELL.



PARIS:

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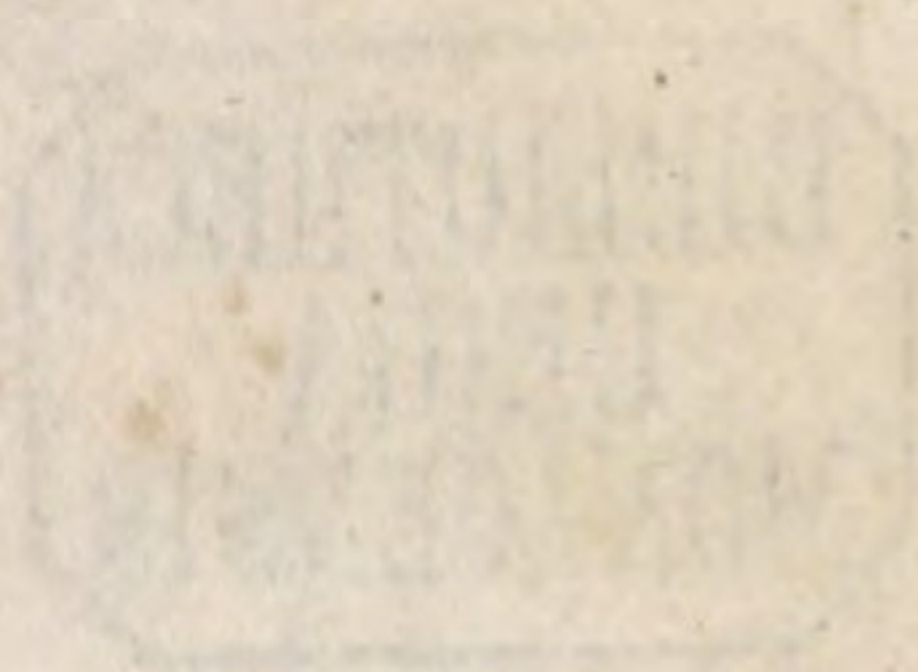


THE

# PROPHECY OF DANTE

BY THE RIGHT HON. LORD BYRON

"The sunset of life gives no mystical light;  
And coming events cast their shadows before."  
CARVER



PARIS:

PRINTED BY A. AND W. GALLANVILLE

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1851.





## DEDICATION.

---

LADY ! if for the cold and cloudy clime  
Where I was born, but where I would not die,  
Of the great Poet-Sire of Italy  
I dare to build the imitative rhyme,  
Harsh Runic copy of the South's sublime,  
THOU art the cause ; and howsoever I  
Fall short of his immortal harmony,  
Thy gentle heart will pardon me the crime.  
Thou, in the pride of Beauty and of Youth,  
Spak'st ; and for thee to speak and be obey'd  
Are one ; but only in the sunny South  
Such sounds are utter'd, and such charms display'd,  
So sweet a language from so fair a mouth—  
Ah ! to what effort would it not persuade ?

*Ravenna, June 21, 1819.*







## PREFACE.

---

IN the course of a visit to the city of Ravenna in the summer of 1819, it was suggested to the author that having composed something on the subject of Tasso's confinement, he should do the same on Dante's exile—the tomb of the poet forming one of the principal objects of interest in that city, both to the native and to the stranger.

« On this hint I spake, » and the result has been the following four cantos, in terza rima, now offered to the reader. If they are understood and approved, it is my purpose to continue the poem in various other



cantos to its natural conclusion in the present age. The reader is requested to suppose that Dante addresses him in the interval between the conclusion of the *Divina Commedia* and his death, and shortly before the latter event, foretelling the fortunes of Italy in general in the ensuing centuries. In adopting this plan I have had in my mind the *Cassandra* of Lycophron, and the *Prophecy of Nereus* by Horace, as well as the *Prophecies of Holy Writ*. The measure adopted is the *terza rima* of Dante, which I am not aware to have seen hitherto tried in our language, except it may be by Mr. Hayley, of whose translation I never saw but one extract, quoted in the notes to *Caliph Vathek*; so that—if I do not err—this poem may be considered as a metrical experiment. The cantos are short, and about the same length of



those of the poet whose name I have borrowed, and most probably taken in vain.

Amongst the inconveniences of authors in the present day, it is difficult for any who have a name, good or bad, to escape translation. I have had the fortune to see the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* translated into Italian *versi sciolti*—that is, a poem written in the *Spenserean Stanza* into *blank verse*, without regard to the natural divisions of the stanza, or of the sense. If the present poem, being on a national topic, should chance to undergo the same fate, I would request the Italian reader to remember that when I have failed in the imitation of his great « *Padre Alighier*, » I have failed in imitating that which all study and few understand, since to this very day it is not yet settled what was the meaning of the allegory in the first canto.



of the *Inferno*, unless Count Marchetti's ingenious and probable conjecture may be considered as having decided the question.

He may also pardon my failure the more, as I am not quite sure that he would be pleased with my success, since the Italians, with a pardonable nationality, are particularly jealous of all that is left them as a nation—their literature; and in the present bitterness of the classic and romantic war, are but ill disposed to permit a foreigner even to approve or imitate them without finding some fault with his ultramontane presumption. I can easily enter into all this, knowing what would be thought in England of an Italian imitator of Milton, or if a translation of Monti, or Pindemonte, or Arici, should be held up to the rising generation as a model for their future poetical essays. But I per-



ceive that I am deviating into an address to the Italian reader, when my business is with the English one, and be they few or many, I must take my leave of both.







THE  
PROPHECY OF DANTE.

---

CANTO I.

ONCE more in man's frail world ! which I had left  
So long that 'twas forgotten ; and I feel  
The weight of clay again,—too soon bereft  
Of the immortal vision which could heal  
My earthly sorrows, and to God's own skies  
Lift me from that deep gulf without repeal,  
Where late my ears rung with the damned cries  
Of souls in hopeless bale ; and from that place  
Of lesser torment, whence men may arise  
Pure from the fire to join the angelic race ;      10  
Midst whom my own bright Beatricê bless'd (1)  
My spirit with her light ; and to the base  
Of the Eternal Triad ! first, last, best,  
Mysterious, three, sole, infinite, great God !  
Soul universal ! led the mortal guest,



Unblasted by the glory, though he trod  
From star to star to reach the almighty throne.  
Oh Beatricê! whose sweet limbs the sod  
So long hath prest, and the cold marble stone,  
Thou sole pure seraph of my earliest love, 20  
Love so ineffable, and so alone,  
That nought on earth could more my bosom move,  
And meeting thee in heaven was but to meet  
That without which my soul, like the arkless dove,  
Had wander'd still in search of, nor her feet  
Relieved her wing till found; without thy light  
My Paradise had still been incomplete. (2)  
Since my tenth sun gave summer to my sight  
Thou wert my life, the essence of my thought,  
Loved ere I knew the name of love, and bright 30  
Still in these dim old eyes, now overwrought  
With the world's war, and years, and banish-  
ment,  
And tears for thee, by other woes untaught;  
For mine is not a nature to be bent  
By tyrannous faction, and the brawling crowd;  
And though the long, long conflict hath been spent  
In vain, and never more, save when the cloud  
Which overhangs the Apennine, my mind's eye



Pierces to fancy Florence, once so proud  
Of me, can I return, though but to die, 40  
Unto my native soil, they have not yet  
Quench'd the old exile's spirit, stern and high.

But the sun, though not overcast, must set,  
And the night cometh ; I am old in days,  
And deeds, and contemplation, and have met  
Destruction face to face in all his ways.

The world hath left me, what it found me, pure,  
And if I have not gather'd yet its praise,  
I sought it not by any baser lure ;

Man wrongs, and Time avenges, and my name 50  
May form a monument not all obscure,  
Though such was not my ambition's end or aim,  
To add to the vain-glorious list of those  
Who dabble in the pettiness of fame,  
And make men's fickle breath the wind that blows  
Their sail, and deem it glory to be class'd  
With conquerors, and virtue's other foes,  
In bloody chronicles of ages past.

I would have had my Florence great and free : <sup>(3)</sup>  
Oh Florence ! Florence ! unto me thou wast 60  
Like that Jerusalem which the Almighty He  
Wept over, « but thou wouldst not ; » as the bird



Gathers its young, I would have gather'd thee  
Beneath a parent pinion, hadst thou heard  
My voice; but as the adder, deaf and fierce,  
Against the breast that cherish'd thee was stirr'd  
Thy venom, and my state thou didst amerce,  
And doom this body forfeit to the fire.  
Alas! how bitter is his country's curse  
To him who *for* that country would expire, 70  
But did not merit to expire *by* her,  
And loves her, loves her even in her ire:  
The day may come when she will cease to err,  
The day may come she would be proud to have  
The dust she dooms to scatter, and transfer (4)  
Of him, whom she denied a home, the grave.  
But this shall not be granted; let my dust  
Lie where it falls; nor shall the soil which gave  
Me breath, but in her sudden fury thrust  
Me forth to breathe elsewhere, so reassume 80  
My indignant bones, because her angry gust  
Forsooth is over, and repeal'd her doom;  
No,—she denied me what was mine—my roof,  
And shall not have what is not hers—my tomb.  
Too long her armed wrath hath kept aloof  
The breast which would have bled for her, the  
heart



That beat, the mind that was temptation proof,  
The man who fought, toil'd, travell'd, and each part  
Of a true citizen fulfill'd, and saw  
For his reward the Guelf's ascendant art 90  
Pass his destruction even into a law.

These things are not made for forgetfulness,  
Florence shall be forgotten first; too raw  
The wound, too deep the wrong, and the distress  
Of such endurance too prolong'd to make  
My pardon greater, her injustice less,  
Though late repented; yet—yet for her sake  
I feel some fonder yearnings, and for thine,  
My own Beatrice, I would hardly take  
Vengeance upon the land which once was mine, 100  
And still is hallow'd by thy dust's return,  
Which would protect the murderess like a shrine,  
And save ten thousand foes by thy sole urn.

Though, like old Marius from Minturnæ's marsh  
And Carthage ruins, my lone breast may burn  
At times with evil feelings hot and harsh,  
And sometimes the last pangs of a vile foe  
Writhe in a dream before me, and o'erarch  
My brow with hopes of triumph,—let them go!  
Such are the last infirmities of those 110



Who long have suffer'd more than mortal woe,  
And yet being mortal still, have no repose  
But on the pillow of Revenge—Revenge,  
Who sleeps to dream of blood, and waking glows  
With the oft-baffled, slakeless thirst of change,  
When we shall mount again, and they that trod  
Be trampled on, while Death and Até range  
O'er humbled heads and sever'd necks—Great God!  
Take these thoughts from me—to thy hands I  
yield

My many wrongs, and thine almighty rod 120  
Will fall on those who smote me,—be my shield!

As thou hast been in peril, and in pain,  
In turbulent cities, and the tented field—  
In toil, and many troubles borne in vain

For Florence.—I appeal from her to Thee!  
Thee, whom I late saw in thy loftiest reign,  
Even in that glorious vision, which to see  
And live was never granted until now,  
And yet thou hast permitted this to me.

Alas! with what a weight upon my brow 130  
The sense of earth and earthly things come back,  
Corrosive passions, feelings dull and low,  
The heart's quick throb upon the mental rack,



Long day, and dreary night ; the retrospect  
Of half a century bloody and black,  
And the frail few years I may yet expect  
Hoary and hopeless, but less hard to bear,  
For I have been too long and deeply wreck'd  
On the lone rock of desolate Despair  
To lift my eyes more to the passing sail 140  
Which shuns that reef so horrible and bare ;  
Nor raise my voice—for who would heed my wail ?  
I am not of this people, nor this age,  
And yet my harpings will unfold a tale  
Which shall preserve these times when not a page  
Of their perturbed annals could attract  
An eye to gaze upon their civil rage  
Did not my verse embalm full many an act  
Worthless as they who wrought it : 'tis the doom  
Of spirits of my order to be rack'd 150  
In life, to wear their hearts out, and consume  
Their days in endless strife, and die alone ;  
Then future thousands crowd around their tomb,  
And pilgrims come from climes where they have  
known  
The name of him—who now is but a name,  
And wasting homage o'er the sullen stone.



Spread his—by him unheard, unheeded—fame ;

And mine at least hath cost me dear : to die

Is nothing ; but to wither thus—to tame

My mind down from its own infinity— 160

To live in narrow ways with little men,

A common sight to every common eye,

A wanderer, while even wolves can find a den,

Ripp'd from all kindred, from all home, all  
things

That make communion sweet, and soften pain—

To feel me in the solitude of kings

Without the power that makes them bear a  
crown—

To envy every dove his nest and wings

Which waft him where the Apennine looks down

On Arno, till he perches, it may be, 170

Within my all inexorable town,

Where yet my boys are, and that fatal she, <sup>(5)</sup>

Their mother, the cold partner who hath brought

Destruction for a dowry—this to see

And feel, and know without repair, hath taught

A bitter lesson ; but it leaves me free :

I have not vilely found, nor basely sought,

They made an Exile—not a slave of me.



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CANTO II.

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THE Spirit of the fervent days of Old,  
When words were things that came to pass, and  
thought  
Flash'd o'er the future, bidding men behold  
Their children's children's doom already brought  
Forth from the abyss of time which is to be,  
The chaos of events, where lie half-wrought  
Shapes that must undergo mortality ;  
What the great Seers of Israel wore within,  
That spirit was on them, and is on me,  
And if, Cassandra-like, amidst the din 10  
Of conflict none will hear, or hearing heed  
This voice from out the Wilderness, the sin  
Be theirs, and my own feelings be my meed,



The only guerdon I have ever known.  
Hast thou not bled? and hast thou still to bleed,  
Italia? Ah! to me such things, foreshown  
With dim sepulchral light, bid me forget  
In thine irreparable wrongs my own;  
We can have but one country, and even yet  
Thou'rt mine—my bones shall be within thy  
breast, 20  
My soul within thy language, which once set  
With our old Roman sway in the wide West;  
But I will make another tongue arise  
As lofty and more sweet, in which exprest  
The hero's ardour, or the lover's sighs,  
Shall find alike such sounds for every theme  
That every word, as brilliant as thy skies,  
Shall realize a poet's proudest dream,  
And make thee Europe's nightingale of song;  
So that all present speech to thine shall seem 30  
The note of meaner birds, and every tongue  
Confess its barbarism when compared with thine.  
This shalt thou owe to him thou didst so wrong,  
Thy Tuscan Bard, the banish'd Ghibelline.  
Woe! woe! the veil of coming centuries  
Is rent,—a thousand years which yet supine



Lie like the ocean waves ere winds arise,  
Heaving in dark and sullen undulation,  
Float from eternity into these eyes ; 39  
The storms yet sleep, the clouds still keep their  
station,

The unborn earthquake yet is in the womb,  
The bloody chaos yet expects creation,  
But all things are disposing for thy doom ;  
The elements await but for the word,  
« Let there be darkness ! » and thou grow'st a  
tomb !

Yes! thou, so beautiful, shalt feel the sword,  
Thou, Italy! so fair that Paradise,  
Revived in thee, blooms forth to man restored :  
Ah! must the sons of Adam lose it twice?

Thou, Italy! whose ever golden fields, 50  
Plough'd by the sunbeams solely, would suffice  
For the world's granary ; thou, whose sky heaven  
gilds

With brighter stars, and robes with deeper blue ;  
Thou, in whose pleasant places Summer builds  
Her palace, in whose cradle Empire grew,  
And form'd the Eternal City's ornaments  
From spoils of kings whom freemen overthrew ;



Birthplace of heroes, sanctuary of saints,  
Where earthly first, then heavenly glory made  
Her home; thou, all which fondest fancy paints,  
And finds her prior vision but portray'd 61  
In feeble colours, when the eye—from the Alp  
Of horrid snow, and rock and shaggy shade  
Of desert-loving pine, whose emerald scalp  
Nods to the storm—dilates and dotes o'er thee,  
And wistfully implores, as 'twere, for help  
To see thy sunny fields, my Italy,  
Nearer and nearer yet, and dearer still  
The more approach'd, and dearest were they  
free,  
Thou—Thou must wither to each tyrant's will: 70  
The Goth hath been,—the German, Frank, and  
Hun  
Are yet to come,—and on the imperial hill  
Ruin, already proud of the deeds done  
By the old barbarians, there awaits the new,  
Throned on the Palatine, while lost and won  
Rome at her feet lies bleeding; and the hue  
Of human sacrifice and Roman slaughter  
Troubles the clotted air, of late so blue,  
And deepens into red the saffron water



Of Tiber, thick with dead ; the helpless priest, 80  
And still more helpless nor less holy daughter,  
Vow'd to their God, have shrieking fled, and ceased  
Their ministry : the nations take their prey,  
Iberian, Almain, Lombard, and the beast  
And bird, wolf, vulture, more humane than they  
Are ; these but gorge the flesh and lap the gore  
Of the departed, and then go their way ;  
But those, the human savages, explore  
All paths of torture, and insatiate yet,  
With Ugolino hunger prowl for more. 90  
Nine moons shall rise o'er scenes like this and set ; (6)  
The chiefless army of the dead, which late  
Beneath the traitor Prince's banner met,  
Hath left its leader's ashes at the gate ;  
Had but the royal Rebel lived, perchance  
Thou hadst been spared, but his involved thy  
fate.  
Oh ! Rome, the spoiler or the spoil of France,  
From Brennus to the Bourbon, never, never  
Shall foreign standard to thy walls advance  
But Tiber shall become a mournful river. 100  
Oh ! when the strangers pass the Alps and Po,  
Crush them, ye rocks ! floods, overwhelm them, and  
for ever !



Why sleep the idle avalanches so,  
To topple on the lonely pilgrim's head?  
Why doth Eridanus but overflow  
The peasant's harvest from his turbid bed?  
Were not each barbarous horde a nobler prey?  
Over Cambyses' host the desert spread  
Her sandy ocean, and the sea waves' sway  
Roll'd over Pharaoh and his thousands,—why, 110  
Mountains and waters, do ye not as they!  
And you, ye men! Romans, who dare not die,  
Sons of the conquerors who overthrew  
Those who overthrew proud Xerxes, where yet  
lie  
The dead whose tomb Oblivion never knew,  
Are the Alps weaker than Thermopylæ?  
Their passes more alluring to the view  
Of an invader? is it they, or ye,  
That to each host the mountain-gate unbar,  
And leave the march in peace, the passage free?  
Why, Nature's self detains the victor's car 121  
And makes your land impregnable, if earth  
Could be so; but alone she will not war,  
Yet aids the warrior worthy of his birth  
In a soil where the mothers bring forth men:



Not so with those whose souls are little worth ;  
For them no fortress can avail,—the den  
Of the poor reptile which preserves its sting  
Is more secure than walls of adamant, when  
The hearts of those within are quivering. 130  
Are ye not brave? Yes, yet the Ausonian soil  
Hath hearts, and hands, and arms, and hosts to  
bring  
Against Oppression; but how vain the toil,  
While still Division sows the seeds of woe  
And weakness, till the stranger reaps the spoil.  
Oh! my own beauteous land! so long laid low,  
So long the grave of thy own children's hopes,  
When there is but required a single blow  
To break the chain, yet—yet the Avenger stops,  
And Doubt and Discord step 'twixt thine and  
thee, 140  
And join their strength to that which with thee  
copes ;  
What is there wanting then to set thee free,  
And show thy beauty in its fullest light?  
To make the Alps impassable ; and we,  
Her sons, may do this with *one* deed——Unite !







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### CANTO III.

---

FROM out the mass of never dying ill,  
The Plague, the Prince, the Stranger, and the  
Sword,

Vials of wrath but emptied to refill  
And flow again, I cannot all record  
That crowds on my prophetic eye : the ear<sup>t</sup>  
And ocean written o'er would not afford  
Space for the annal, yet it shall go forth ;  
Yes, all, though not by human pen, is graven,  
There where the farthest suns and stars have  
birth.

Spread like a banner at the gate of heaven, 10  
The bloody scroll of our millennial wrongs  
Waves, and the echo of our groans is driven  
Athwart the sound of archangelic songs,



And Italy, the martyr'd nation's gore,  
Will not in vain arise to where belongs  
Omnipotence and mercy evermore ;  
Like to a harpstring stricken by the wind,  
The sound of her lament shall, rising o'er  
The seraph voices, touch the Almighty Mind.  
Meantime I, humblest of thy sons, and of 20  
Earth's dust by immortality refined  
To sense and suffering, though the vain may scoff,  
And tyrants threat, and meeker victims bow  
Before the storm because its breath is rough,  
To thee, my country ! whom before, as now,  
I loved and love, devote the mournful lyre  
And melancholy gift high powers allow  
To read the future ; and if now my fire  
Is not as once it shone o'er thee, forgive !  
I but foretell thy fortunes—then expire ; 30  
Think not that I would look on them and live.  
A spirit forces me to see and speak,  
And for my guerdon grants *not* to survive ;  
My heart shall be pour'd over thee and break :  
Yet for a moment, ere I must resume  
Thy sable web of sorrow, let me take  
Over the gleams that flash athwart thy gloom



A softer glimpse ; some stars shine through thy  
night,  
And many meteors, and above thy tomb  
Leans sculptured Beauty, which Death cannot  
blight ;

And from thine ashes boundless spirits rise 41  
To give thee honour, and the earth delight ;  
Thy soil shall still be pregnant with the wise,  
The gay, the learn'd, the generous, and the brave,  
Native to thee as summer to thy skies,  
Conquerors on foreign shores and the far wave, (7)  
Discoverers of new worlds, which take their  
name ; (8)

For *thee* alone they have no arm to save,  
And all thy recompense is in their fame,  
A noble one to them, but not to thee— 50  
Shall they be glorious, and thou still the same?  
Oh ! more than these illustrious far shall be  
The being—and even yet he may be born—  
The mortal saviour who shall set thee free,  
And see thy diadem, so changed and worn  
By fresh barbarians, on thy brow replaced ;  
And the sweet sun replenishing thy morn,  
Thy moral morn, too long with clouds defaced



And noxious vapours from Avernus risen,  
Such as all they must breathe who are debased 60  
By servitude, and have the mind in prison.

Yet through this centuried eclipse of woe  
Some voices shall be heard, and earth shall listen ;  
Poets shall follow in the path I show,  
And make it broader ; the same brilliant sky  
Which cheers the birds to song shall bid them  
glow,

And raise their notes as natural and high ;  
Tuneful shall be their numbers : they shall sing  
Many of love, and some of liberty,

But few shall soar upon that eagle's wing, 70  
And look in the sun's face with eagle's gaze  
All free and fearless as the feather'd king,

But fly more near the earth ; how many a phrase  
Sublime shall lavish'd be on some small prince  
In all the prodigality of praise !

And language, eloquently false, evince  
The harlotry of genius, which, like beauty,  
Too oft forgets its own self-reverence,

And looks on prostitution as a duty.

He who once enters in a tyrant's hall (9) 80  
As guest is slave, his thoughts become a booty,



And the first day which sees the chain enthrall  
A captive, sees his half of manhood gone—<sup>(10)</sup>  
The soul's emasculation saddens all  
His spirit; thus the Bard too near the throne  
Quails from his inspiration, bound to *please*,—  
How servile is the task to please alone!  
To smooth the verse to suit his sovereign's ease  
And royal leisure, nor too much prolong  
Aught save his eulogy, and find, and seize, 90  
Or force, or forge fit argument of song!  
Thus trammell'd, thus condemn'd to Flattery's  
trebles,  
He toils through all, still trembling to be wrong:  
For fear some noble thoughts, like heavenly rebels,  
Should rise up in high treason to his brain,  
He sings, as the Athenian spoke, with pebbles  
In 's mouth, lest truth should stammer through his  
strain.  
But out of the long file of sonneteers  
There shall be some who will not sing in vain,  
And he, their prince, shall rank among my peers, <sup>(11)</sup>  
And love shall be his torment; but his grief 101  
Shall make an immortality of tears,  
And Italy shall hail him as the Chief



Of Poet-lovers, and his higher song  
Of Freedom wreath him with as green a leaf.  
But in a farther age shall rise along  
The banks of Po, two greater still than he;  
The world which smiled on him shall do them  
wrong

Till they are ashes, and repose with me.

The first will make an epoch with his lyre, 110  
And fill the earth with feats of chivalry :  
His fancy like a rainbow, and his fire,  
Like that of heaven, immortal, and his thought  
Borne onward with a wing that cannot tire ;  
Pleasure shall, like a butterfly new caught,  
Flutter her lovely pinions o'er his theme,  
And Art itself seem into Nature wrought  
By the transparency of his bright dream.—

The second, of a tenderer, sadder mood,  
Shall pour his soul out o'er Jerusalem; 120  
He, too, shall sing of arms, and christian blood  
Shed where Christ bled for man ; and his high  
harp

Shall, by the willow over Jordan's flood,  
Revive a song of Sion, and the sharp  
Conflict, and final triumph of the brave



And pious, and the strife of hell to warp  
Their hearts from their great purpose, until wave  
The red-cross banners where the first red Cross  
Was crimson'd from his veins who died to save,  
Shall be his sacred argument; the loss 130  
Of years, of favour, freedom, even of fame  
Contested for a time, while the smooth gloss  
Of courts would slide o'er his forgotten name,  
And call captivity a kindness, meant  
To shield him from insanity or shame,  
Such shall be his meet guerdon! who was sent  
To be Christ's Laureate—they reward him well!  
Florence dooms me but death or banishment,  
Ferrara him a pittance and a cell,  
Harder to bear and less deserved, for I 140  
Had stung the factions which I strove to quell;  
But this meek man, who with a lover's eye  
Will look on earth and heaven, and who will  
deign  
To embalm with his celestial flattery  
As poor a thing as e'er was spawn'd to reign,  
What will *he* do to merit such a doom?  
Perhaps he'll *love*,—and is not love in vain  
Torture enough without a living tomb?



Yet it will be so—he and his compeer,  
The Bard of Chivalry, will both consume 150  
In penury and pain too many a year,  
And, dying in despondency, bequeath  
To the kind world, which scarce will yield a tear,  
A heritage enriching all who breathe  
With the wealth of a genuine poet's soul,  
And to their country a redoubled wreath,  
Unmatch'd by time ; not Hellas can unroll  
Through her olympiads two such names, though  
one  
Of hers be mighty ;—and is this the whole  
Of such men's destiny beneath the sun? 160  
Must all the finer thoughts, the thrilling sense,  
The electric blood with which their arteries run,  
Their body's self turn'd soul with the intense  
Feeling of that which is, and fancy of  
That which should be, to such a recompense  
Conduct ? shall their bright plumage on the rough  
Storm be still scatter'd ? Yes, and it must be,  
For, form'd of far too penetrable stuff,  
These birds of Paradise but long to flee  
Back to their native mansion, soon they find 170  
Earth's mist with their pure pinions not agree,



And die or are degraded, for the mind  
Succumbs to long infection, and despair,  
And vulture passions flying close behind,  
Await the moment to assail and tear;  
And when at length the winged wanderers stoop,  
Then is the prey-bird's triumph, then they share  
The spoil, o'erpower'd at length by one fell swoop.  
Yet some have been untouch'd, who learn'd to  
bear,

Some whom no power could ever force to droop,  
Who could resist themselves even, hardest care! 181  
And task most hopeless; but some such have been,  
And if my name amongst the number were,  
That destiny austere, and yet serene,  
Were prouder than more dazzling fame unblest;  
The Alp's snow summit nearer heaven is seen  
Than the volcano's fierce eruptive crest,  
Whose splendour from the black abyss is flung,  
While the scorch'd mountain, from whose burn-  
ing breast

A temporary torturing flame is wrung, 190  
Shines for a night of terror, then repels  
Its fire back to the hell from whence it sprung,  
The hell which in its entrails ever dwells.



And die or are forgotten, for the mind  
 Succumbs to long infection, and despair,  
 And valiant passions lying close behind,  
 Await the moment to assail and tear;  
 And when at length the winged wanderer stops,  
 Then is the prey bird's triumph, then they share  
 The spoil, & empowered at length by one full swoop,  
 Yet some have been untouch'd, who learn'd to  
 Some when no power could ever force to drop,  
 Yet could resist themselves even, undaunted!  
 And that may happen; but some such have been,  
 And in my name amongst the number none;  
 That do my name, and yet are none;  
 Were greater than more daring fame could boast;  
 The Alps' snowy summit never heaved in scorn  
 Than the volcano's fierce & native crest;  
 Whose splendour from the black abyss is flung;  
 While the scorched mountain, from whose fount  
 A temporary burning flame is winged,  
 Shines for a night of terror, then recoils,  
 Its face back to the hell from whence it springs,  
 The hell which in its craters ever dwells.



## CANTO IV.

MANY are poets who have never penn'd  
 Their inspiration, and perchance the best :  
 They felt, and loved, and died, but would not lend  
 Their thoughts to meaner beings ; they compress'd  
 The god within them, and rejoin'd the stars  
 Unlaurell'd upon earth, but far more blest  
 Than those who are degraded by the jars  
 Of passion, and their frailties link'd to fame,  
 Conquerors of high renown, but full of scars.

Many are poets but without the name, 10  
 For what is poesy but to create  
 From overfeeling good or ill ; and aim  
 At an external life beyond our fate,



And be the new Prometheus of new men,  
Bestowing fire from heaven, and then, too late,  
Finding the pleasure given repaid with pain,  
And vultures to the heart of the bestower,  
Who, having lavish'd his high gift in vain,  
Lies chain'd to his lone rock by the sea-shore?  
So be it : we can bear.—But thus all they, 20  
Whose intellect is an o'ermastering power  
Which still recoils from its encumbering clay  
Or lightens it to spirit, whatsoe'er  
The form which their creations may essay,  
Are bards ; the kindled marble's bust may wear  
More poesy upon its speaking brow  
Than aught less than the Homeric page may  
bear ;  
One noble stroke with a whole life may glow,  
Or deify the canvas till it shine  
With beauty so surpassing all below, 30  
That they who kneel to idols so divine  
Break no commandment, for high heaven is  
there  
Transfused, transfigured : and the line  
Of poesy, which peoples but the air  
With thought and beings of our thought re-  
flected,



Can do no more : then let the artist share  
The palm, he shares the peril, and dejected  
Faints o'er the labour unapproved—Alas !  
Despair and Genius are too oft connected.  
Within the ages which before me pass 40  
Art shall resume and equal even the sway  
Which with Apelles and old Phidias  
She held in Hellas' unforgotten day.  
Ye shall be taught by Ruin to revive  
The Grecian forms at least from their decay,  
And Roman souls at last again shall live  
In Roman works wrought by Italian hands,  
And temples, loftier than the old temples, give  
New wonders to the world ; and while still stands  
The austere Pantheon, into heaven shall soar 50  
A dome, <sup>(12)</sup> its image, while the base expands  
Into a fane surpassing all before,  
Such as all flesh shall flock to kneel in : ne'er  
Such sight hath been unfolded by a door.  
As this, to which all nations shall repair  
And lay their sins at this huge gate of heaven.  
And the bold Architect unto whose care  
The daring charge to raise it shall be given,  
Whom all arts shall acknowledge as their lord,



Whether into the marble chaos driven 60  
His chisel bid the Hebrew, <sup>(13)</sup> at whose word  
Israel left Egypt, stop the waves in stone,  
Or hues of hell be by his pencil pour'd  
Over the damn'd before the Judgment throne, <sup>(14)</sup>  
Such as I saw them, such as all shall see,  
Or fanes be built of grandeur yet unknown,  
The stream of his great thoughts shall spring from  
me, <sup>(15)</sup>  
The Ghibelline, who traversed the three realms  
Which form the empire of eternity.  
Amidst the clash of swords, and clang of helms, 70  
The age which I anticipate, no less  
Shall be the Age of Beauty, and while whelms  
Calamity the nations with distress,  
The genius of my country shall arise,  
A Cedar towering o'er the Wilderness,  
Lovely in all its branches to all eyes,  
Fragrant as fair, and recognized afar,  
Wafting its native incense through the skies.  
Sovereigns shall pause amidst their sport of war,  
Wean'd for an hour from blood, to turn and  
gaze 80  
On canvas or on stone; and they who mar



All beauty upon earth, compell'd to praise,  
Shall feel the power of that which they destroy ;  
And Art's mistaken gratitude shall raise  
To tyrants who but take her for a toy  
Emblems and monuments, and prostitute  
Her charms to pontiffs proud,<sup>(16)</sup> who but employ  
The man of genius as the meanest brute  
To bear a burthen, and to serve a need.  
To sell his labours, and his soul to boot: 90  
Who toils for nations may be poor indeed  
But free ; who sweats for monarchs is no more  
Than the gilt chamberlain, who, clothed and  
fee'd,  
Stands sleek and slavish, bowing at his door.  
Oh, Power that rulest and inspirest ! how  
Is it that they on earth, whose earthly power  
Is likest thine in heaven in outward show,  
Least like to thee in attributes divine,  
Tread on the universal necks that bow,  
And then assure us that their rights are thine ? 100  
And how is it that they, the sons of fame,  
Whose inspiration seems to them to shine  
From high, they whom the nations ofttest name,  
Must pass their days in penury or pain,



Or step to grandeur through the paths of shame,  
And wear a deeper brand, and gaudier chain?

Or if their destiny be born aloof

From lowliness, or tempted thence in vain,  
In their own souls sustain a harder proof,

The inner war of passions deep and fierce? 110

Florence! when thy harsh sentence razed my  
roof,

I loved thee; but the vengeance of my verse,

The hate of injuries which every year

Makes greater, and accumulates my curse,

Shall live, outliving all thou holdest dear,

Thy pride, thy wealth, thy freedom, and even  
*that,*

The most infernal of all evils here,

The sway of petty tyrants in a state;

For such sway is not limited to kings,

And demagogues yield to them but in date 120

As swept off sooner; in all deadly things

Which make men hate themselves, and one  
another,

In discord, cowardice, cruelty, all that springs  
From Death the Sin-born's incest with his mother,

In rank oppression in its rudest shape,



The faction Chief is but the Sultan's brother,  
And the worst despot's far less human ape :  
Florence! when this lone spirit, which so long  
Yearn'd, as the captive toiling at escape,  
To fly back to thee in despite of wrong, 130  
An exile, saddest of all prisoners,  
Who has the whole world for a dungeon strong,  
Seas, mountains, and the horizon's verge for bars,  
Which shut him from the sole small spot of earth  
Where—whatsoe'er his fate—he still were hers,  
His country's, and might die where he had birth—  
Florence! when this lone spirit shall return  
To kindred spirits, thou wilt feel my worth,  
And seek to honour with an empty urn  
The ashes thou shalt ne'er obtain.—Alas! 140  
“What have I done to thee, my people?” (17)

Stern

Are all thy dealings, but in this they pass  
The limits of man's common malice, for  
All that a citizen could be I was;  
Raised by thy will, all thine in peace or war,  
And for this thou hast warr'd with me.—'Tis  
done :  
I may not overleap the eternal bar



Built up between us, and will die alone,  
Beholding, with the dark eye of a seer,  
The evil days to gifted souls foreshown, 150  
Foretelling them to those who will not hear,  
As in the old time, till the hour be come  
When Truth shall strike their eyes through  
many a tear,  
And make them own the Prophet in his tomb.



# NOTES

TO THE

## PROPHECY OF DANTE.

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Note 1, page 9, line 11.

*Midst whom my own bright Beatrice blessed.*

The reader is requested to adopt the Italian pronunciation of Beatrice, sounding all the syllables.

Note 2, page 10, line 12.

*My Paradise had still been incomplete.*

« Che sol per le belle opre

« Che fanno in Cielo il sole e l' altre stelle

« Dentro di lui si crede il Paradiso,

« Così se guardi fiso

« Pensar ben dèi ch' ogni terren' piacere. »

Canzone, in which Dante describes the person of Beatrice, Strophe third.

Note 3, page 11, line 21.

*I would have had my Florence great and free.*

« L' Esilio che m' è dato onor mi tegno.

\* \* \* \* \*

« Cader tra' buoni è pur di lode degno. »

*Sonnet of Dante,*

in which he represents Right, Generosity, and Temperance



as banished from among men, and seeking refuge from Love, who inhabits his bosom.

Note 4, page 12, line 13.

*The dust she dooms to scatter.*

« Ut si quis predictorum ullo tempore in fortiam dicti communis pervenerit, *talis perveniens igne comburatur, sic quod moriatur.* »

Second sentence of Florence against Dante, and the fourteen accused with him. — The Latin is worthy of the sentence.

Note 5, page 16, line 18.

*Where yet my boys are, and that fatal she.*

This lady, whose name was *Gemma*, sprung from one of the most powerful Guelf families, named Donati. Corso Donati was the principal adversary of the Ghibellines. She is described as being « *Admodum morosa, ut de Xantippe Socratis philosophi conjuge scriptum esse legimus,* » according to Giannozzo Manetti. But Lionardo Aretino is scandalized with Boccace, in his life of Dante, for saying that literary men should not marry. « Quì il Boccaccio non ha pazienza, e dice, le mogli esser contrarie agli studj; e non si ricorda che Socrate il più nobile filosofo che mai fosse ebbe moglie, e figliuoli e ufficj della Repubblica nella sua Città; e Aristotele che, etc. etc. ebbe due mogli in varj tempi, ed ebbe figliuoli, e ricchezze assai. — E Marco Tullio — e Catone — e Varrone, e Seneca — ebbero moglie, » etc. etc. It is odd that honest Lionardo's examples, with the exception of Seneca, and, for any thing I know, of Aristotle, are not the most felicitous. Tully's Terentia, and Socrates's Xantippe, by no means contributed to their husbands' happiness, whatever



they might do to their philosophy—Cato gave away his wife—of Varro's we know nothing—and of Seneca's, only that she was disposed to die with him, but recovered, and lived several years afterwards. But, says Lionardo, « L' uomo è *animale civile*, secondo piace a tutti i filosofi. » And thence concludes that the greatest proof of the *animal's civism* is « la prima congiunzione, dalla quale moltiplicata nasce la Città. »

Note 6, page 21, line 12.

*Nine moons shall rise o'er scenes like this and set.*

See « Sacco di Roma, » generally attributed to Guicciardini. There is another written by a Jacopo *Buonaparte*, Gentiluomo Samminiatese che vi si trovò presente.

Note 7, page 27, line 11.

*Conquerors on foreign shores, and the far wave.*

Alexander of Parma, Spinola, Pescara, Eugene of Savoy, Montecucco.

Note 8, page 27, line 13.

*Discoverers of new worlds, which take their name.*

Columbus, Americus Vesputius, Sebastian Cabot.

Note 9, page 28, line 23.

*He who once enters in a tyrant's hall, etc.*

A verse from the Greek tragedians, with which Pompey took leave of Cornelia on entering the boat in which he was slain.

Note 10, page 29, line 2.

*And the first day which sees the chain enthral, etc.*

The verse and sentiment are taken from Homer.



Note 11, page 29, line 21.

*And he, their prince, shall rank among my peers.*

Petrarch.

Note 12, page 37, line 16.

*A dome, its image.*

The cupola of St. Peter's.

Note 13, page 38, line 2.

*His chisel bid the Hebrew.*

The statue of Moses on the monument of Julius II.

### SONETTO.

*Di Giovanni Battista Zappi.*

Chi è costui, che in dura pietra scolto,  
 Siede gigante; e le più illustre, e conte  
 Prove dell' arte avvanza, e ha vive, e pronte  
 Le labbia sì, che le parole ascolto?  
 Quest' è Mosè; ben me 'l diceva il folto  
 Onor del mento, e 'l doppio raggio in fronte,  
 Quest' è Mosè, quando scendea del monte,  
 E gran parte del Nume avea nel volto.  
 Tal era allor, che le sonanti, e vaste  
 Acque ei sospese a se d' intorno, e tale  
 Quando il mar chiuse, e ne fè tomba altrui.  
 E voi sue turbe un rio vitello alzate?  
 Alzata aveste imago a questra eguale!  
 Ch' era men fallo l' adorar costui.



Note 14, page 38, line 5.

*Over the damn'd before the Judgment throne.*

The Last Judgment in the Sistine chapel.

Note 15, page 38, line 9.

*The stream of his great thoughts shall spring from me.*

I have read somewhere (if I do not err, for I cannot recollect where) that Dante was so great a favourite of Michel Angiolo's, that he had designed the whole of the Divina Commedia; but that the volume containing these studies was lost by sea.

Note 16, page 39, line 6.

*Her charms to pontiffs proud, who but employ, etc.*

See the treatment of Michel Angiolo by Julius II., and his neglect by Leo X.

Note 17, page 41, line 16.

« *What have I done to thee my people?* »

« E scrisse più volte non solamente a particolari cittadini del reggimento, ma ancora al popolo, e intra l' altre un Epistola assai lunga che comincia : — ‘ *Popule mi, quid feci tibi?* ’ »

*Vita di Dante scritta da Lionardo Aretino.*

THE END.

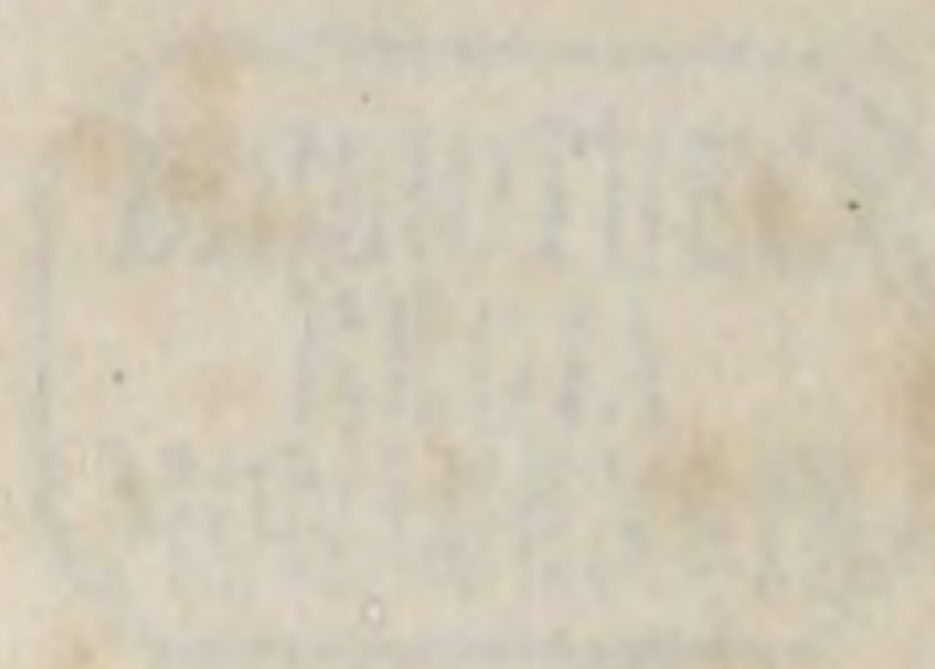








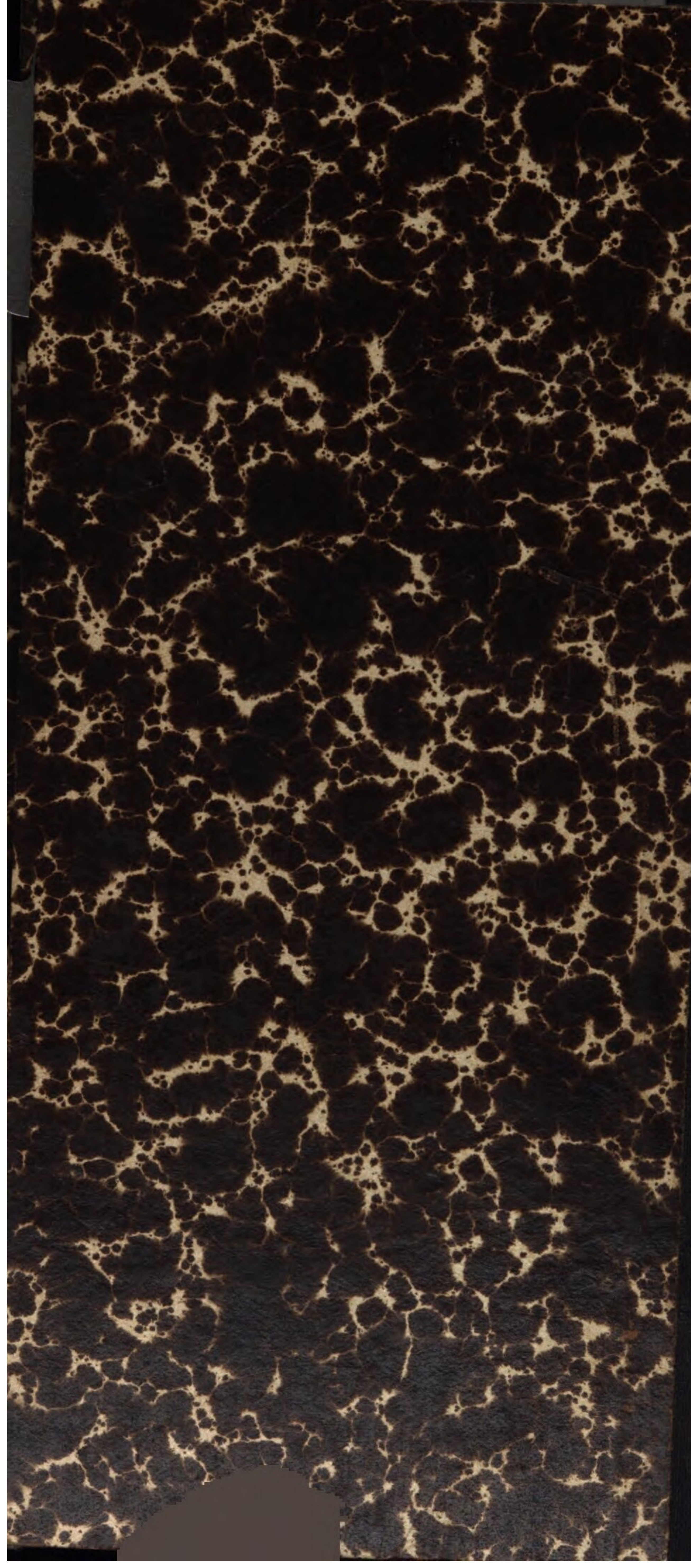








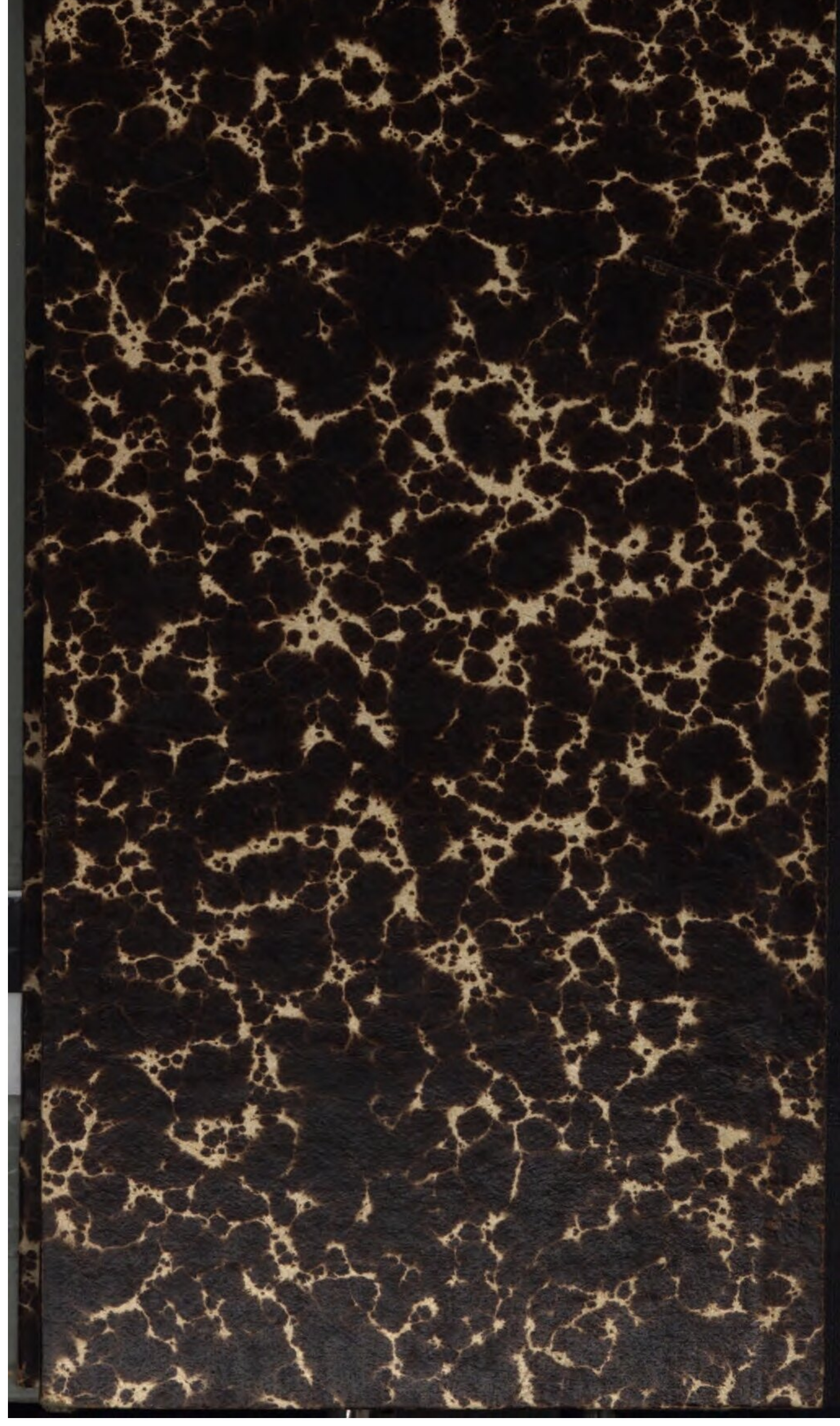
















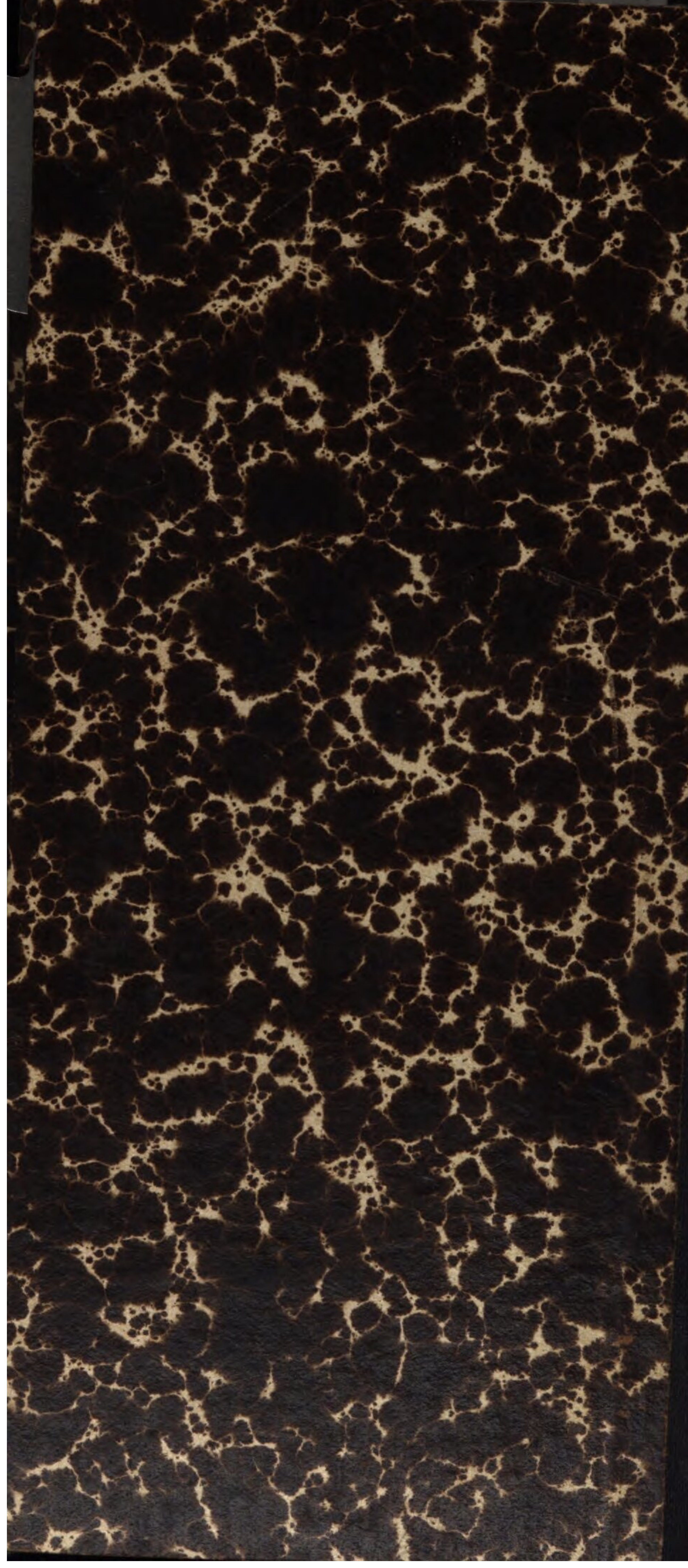








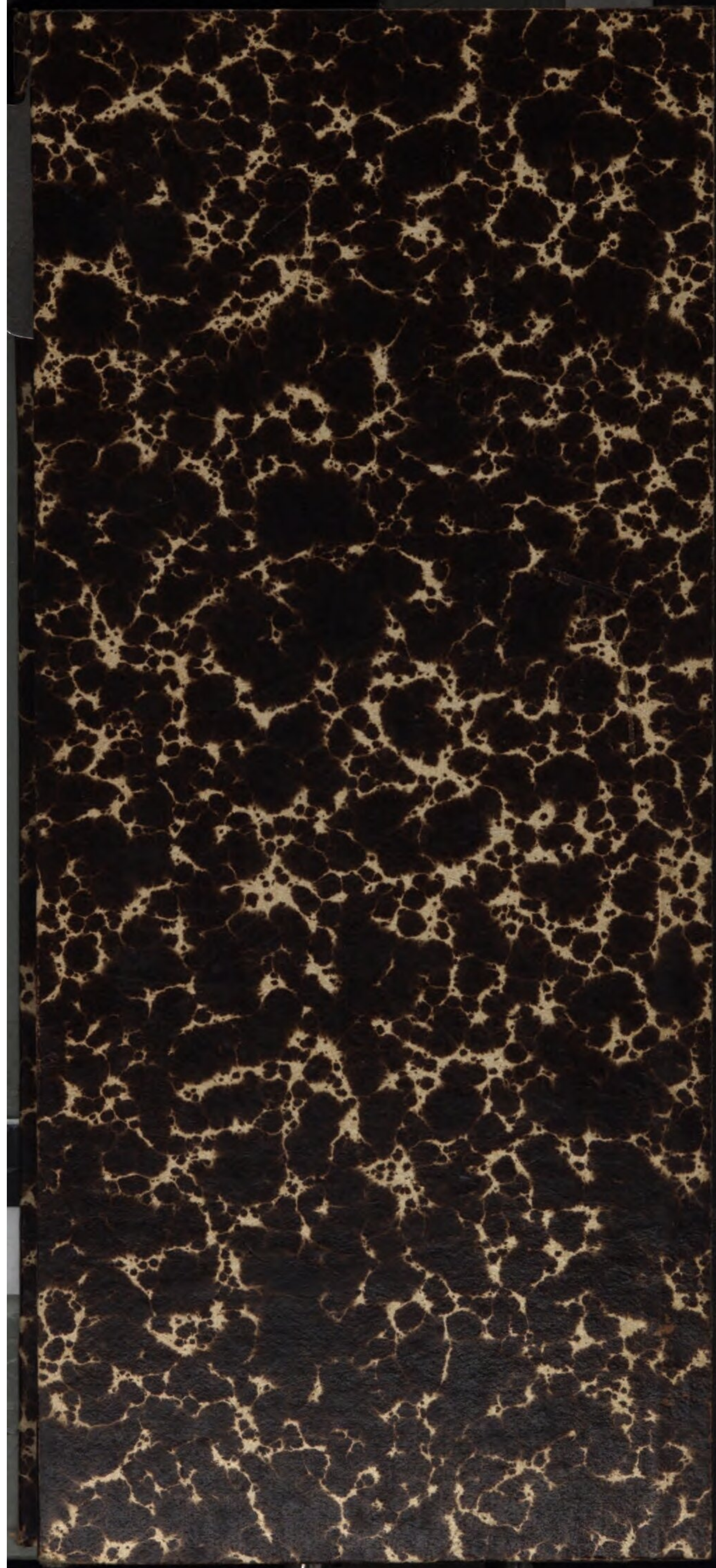








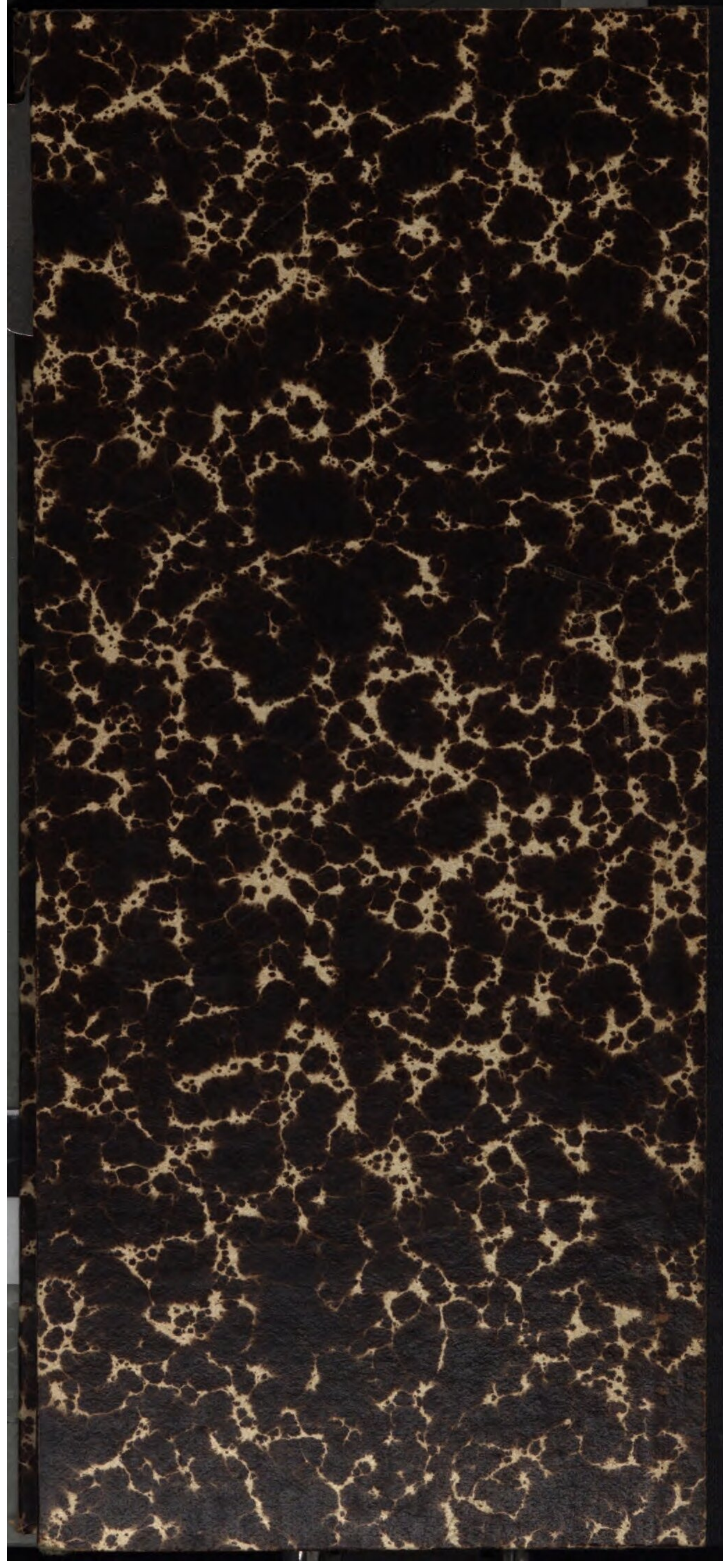








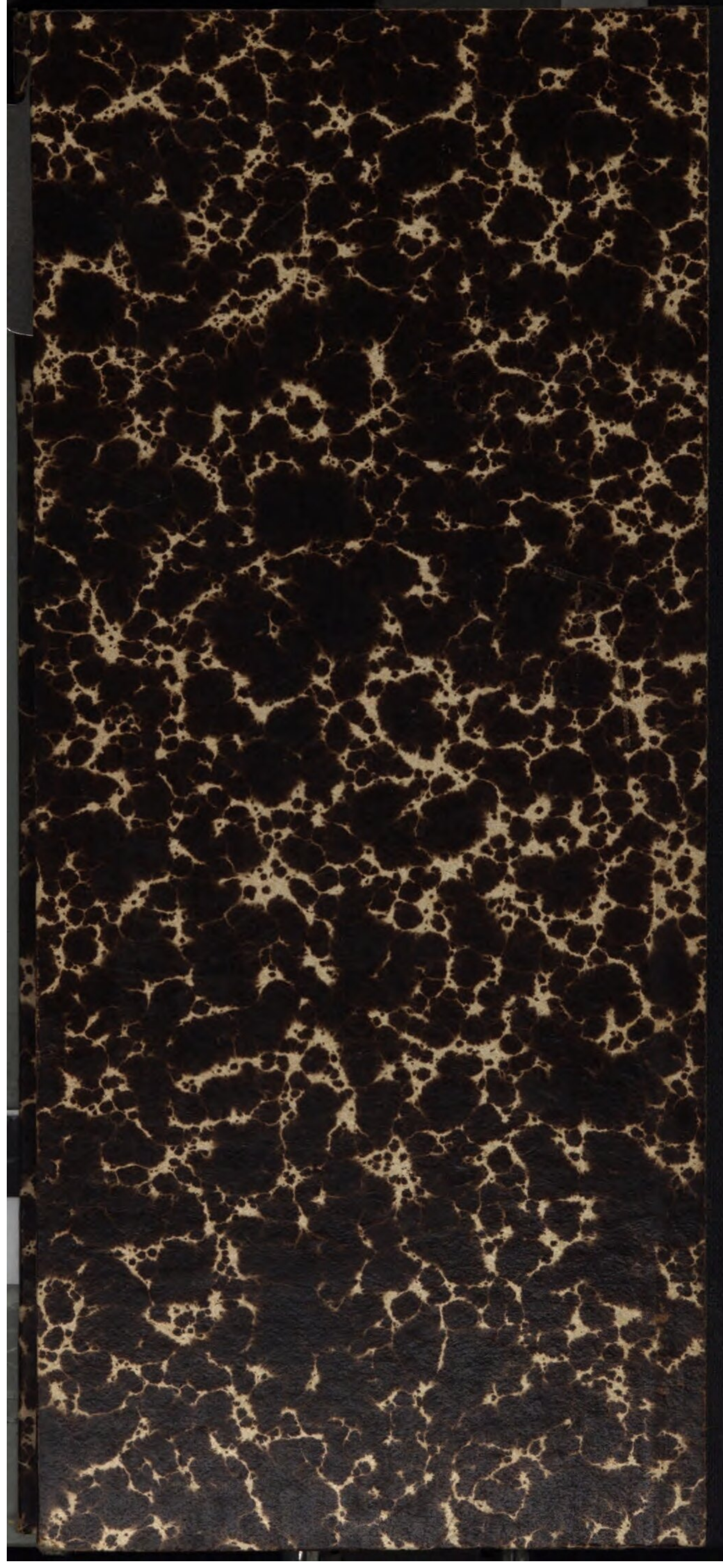








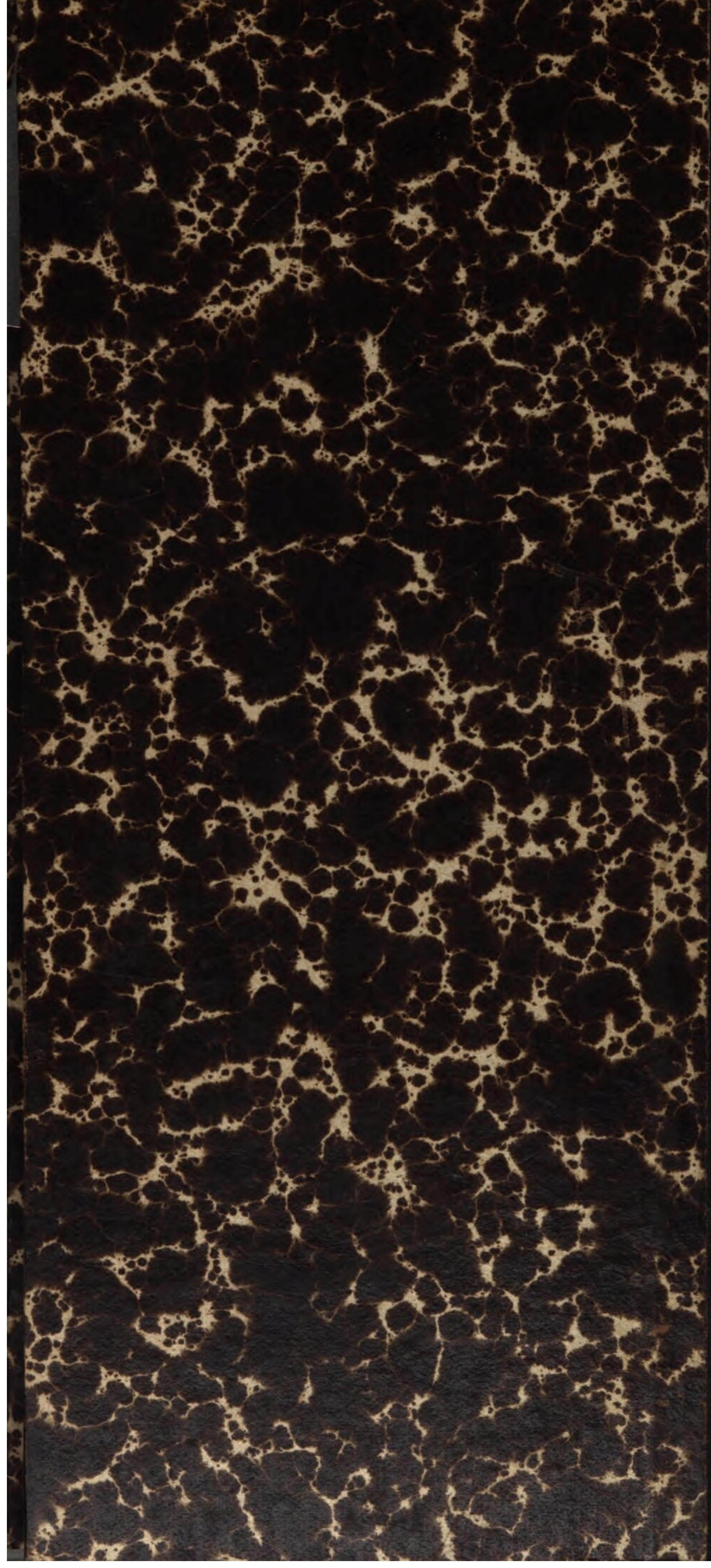








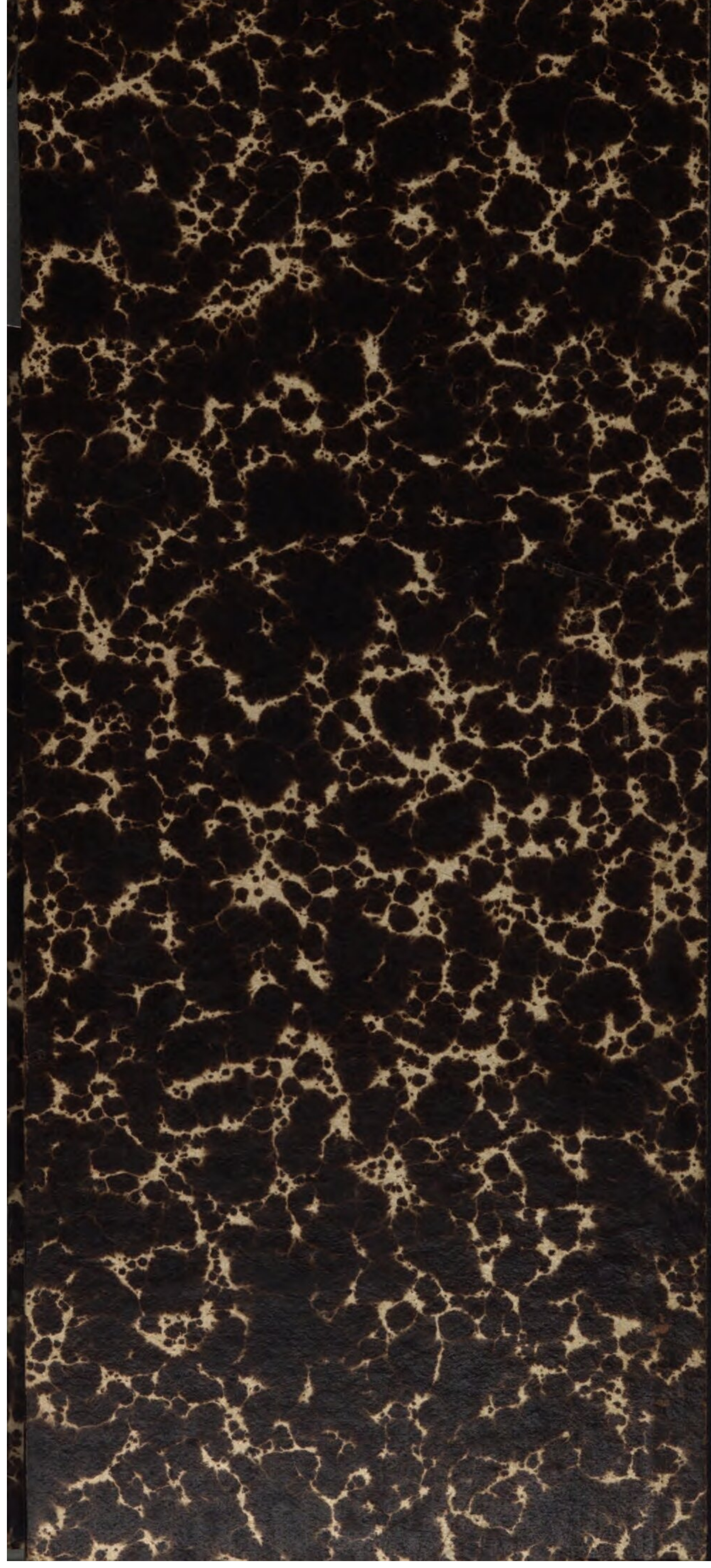














Byron, George Gordon Byron

The prophecy of Dante

Paris 1821

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